



CREEPY

#83
OCT. 1983

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SUPER SUMMER SPECIAL



SEVEN SPECTACULAR STORIES!
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ART: BERNI WRIGHTSON



SEVEN SPECTACULAR STORIES!
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CREEPY

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Dear Uncle Creepy...



CREEPY #80 was a fair issue!

Its cover, however, was fantastic! It was a pleasure to buy a magazine with that kind of artwork! Congratulations, Ken Kelly, on a masterful job!

"Benjamin Jones and the Imaginers" was terrific, a great story, steeped in the EC tradition.

I did not like "Second Genesis" (too pretentiously serious) but I loved "The Fable of Bald Sheba and Monte-bank the Rogue." Great concept, funny comic!

"Proof Positive" was not one of my favorites. The art was beautiful but it was annoying to have to turn the book sideways to read the story. It was an experiment (and Warren should by all means, continue to experiment) but this one didn't work!

"Aint It Just Like The Night" was a good clear suspenseful monster story that didn't telegraph its ending long before the final page. More like this one, please.

I didn't like "The Axeman Cometh" or "The Last Chronicle," for that matter. Where were the vampires, werewolves, monsters?

CREEPY is a horror magazine, remember?

C. CRACKED
Muskego, Wis.

Congratulations to Budd Lewis and Luis Bermejo. "Benjamin Jones and the Imaginers" had a Ray Bradbury feel that captured both the wonder and horror of childhood. Bermejo once again proved himself a masterful illustrator of whimsical fantasy as he did earlier in "The January Man." A delightful fable!

JEFF SPENCER
Bridgeport, Conn.

CREEPY #80 combined the new and the old CREEPY story-telling.

In "The Axe-Man Cometh" and "Just Like The Night" we had flashes of the old days' the O'Henry type of twist endings that characterized the early Archie Goodwin tales.

CREEPY's new character-oriented direction was well represented in "Benjamin Jones and the Imaginers," "The Last Chronicle," and "Second Genesis."

Which is better? Neither. Or rather, both.

CREEPY's #80 shows that the two styles can co-exist peacefully in the pages of the same magazine without sacrificing quality.

MARTIN MEYERS
Brooklyn, N.Y.

"The Axe-Man Cometh" in CREEPY #80 was good, but too short. Five pages is just not enough for the kind of plot, character, and "twist" development that the writers Gerry Boudreau and Carl Wessler were trying to achieve. It's nice to have seven stories in one issue, but not at the expense of quality.

TIM NICKERSON
Central Falls, R.I.

CREEPY #80 points out more clearly the need for a science-fiction magazine from Warren.

Look at "The Last Chronicle" or "Second Genesis." Well-written, imaginative, good speculative fiction.

But one or two stories in CREEPY's is not enough! We want more of that kind of quality SF/Fantasy!

Now that you've whet our appetites, how about serving up a full course?

JIMMY SIEBURTH
Baton Rouge, La.

CREEPY #80 was bland. Not really bad, but it provided little to get excited over.

The lead story, "Benjamin Jones and the Imaginers" was the only entry that was fully satisfactory. Budd Lewis' script, in the venerable EC tradition, was good. And Luis Bermejo's art continues to improve.

If only the rest of the issue lived up to this auspicious beginning.

Unfortunately it did not.

"Second Genesis" was disappointing. Esteban Maroto's art was not by me. Using it seemed scratchy and less vibrant than usual. And the ending of Gerry Boudreau's story was totally predictable. Standard sci-fi.

The two most interesting characters, the sceptic rat and lizard, were dropped at the end of part one, never to appear again.

From where I was sitting, the extra-terrestrial beauty contest had nothing whatsoever to do with the story. It seems to have been introduced solely to give Maroto a chance to draw some great-looking girls. And that's just plain lazy plotting.

BRIAN CADEN
Cincinnati, Ohio

Ken Kelly's cover for CREEPY #80 was magnificent! Rarely have I seen such a heroic-looking demon or a lovely damsel in distress! It is simply composed, executed with just the right amount of detail, and appealing to the eye.

If you'd gotten rid of the cover blurbs, Warren would have had the perfect poster cover!

KENNETH JAY
Rockport, Mass.

"Second Genesis" was entertaining although the balloon placement sometimes made the story difficult to follow. The carefully plotted and thought-provoking theme of a man trapped between past and present in cyclic time was presented with realistic extra touches, such as telepathic animals, an intersteller beauty pageant, and liberal doses of sarcasm and liberal doses of sarcasm.

These raised the story above the level of a one-idea, "gimmick." Esteban Maroto's art was every bit as good as we've come to expect from this brilliant, innovative illustrator.

JOHN BROWN
Seattle, Wash.

CREEPY #80 offered up what I hope to be a trend in upcoming Warren books, move towards a more optimistic, positive story, rather than a constant barrage of doom and horror.

Doug Moench and Marion Salvador's "Aint It Just Like The Night" stands out as an extremely well-handled story of mystery, suspense, science-fiction and interplanetary drama. A clean reserve in both the script and art provided for an uncluttered and effective graphic statement.

The understated and effective crooked cop sequence was a masterful demonstration of how gracefully Moench and Salvador work together.

Amid the tragedies of the ending, the final note was an optimistic one, that there would be some hope for man that he was worth saving. It's a pleasant tone among all the psychopaths and axe-murders.

ROBERT H. WEBB
Denton, Texas

The clever Bill Dubay script for "The Fable of Bald Sheba and Monte-bank the Rogue" could not carry this story alone. Jose Luis' art was simply not his best. Of course, Bill's style is more appropriate to the bizarre and fantastic. Perhaps Asafoean would have been a better choice.

RALPH SMITH
Augusta, Ga.

At one time, CREEPY was full of pretty pictures. A lot of faces in static poses, but little action and even less continuity between panels.

Now, the pretty pictures are still there, as is the meticulous attention to detail, but something new has been added, storytelling. The art no longer seems detached from the story. The two work together to create an overall effect.

In CREEPY #80, the art of Luis Bermejo, Jose Ortiz and Jorge Galvez still has an "illustrative" rather than "comic" style. But now it contributes to the flow of the story, it advances the action. It no longer seems like a series of still lifes or spot photos.

STEVE MITCHUM
Cincinnati, Ohio

I seldom write a letter to any publication. I do so only when I am as moved as I was by a story in CREEPY #80, "Second Genesis." In my opinion, this story ranks with the best of the science-fiction genre.

As a writer/illustrator myself I can fully appreciate the harmonious union of both story (Gerry Boudreau) and art (Esteban Maroto) necessary to pull off an ending so thought-provoking and controversial that it revealed the finale of "Forbidden Planet" (film) and "Silent Running."

Before shooting, most films are designed on storyboards. These stories are blocked out by the director before shooting, as was done in "2001." And as one former co-worker once told me, "if it doesn't look good on paper, it ain't gonna look so hot on celluloid."

Well, it's looking good on paper counts. Warren had some winners in this issue that would make it in any medium: be it book, comic pulp, or film. Without going into graphic arts or creative writing, I'll be brief and say that, judging by issue #80, the chemistry between Warren's artists and writers is right, and is especially right between Boudreau and Maroto.

JOSEPH BILLIE
Los Angeles, Calif.

opinions? write...com

DEAR UNCLE
CREEPY

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PROLOGUE

THERE THEY ARE, AGAIN, THE NOISES, THEY EVER SOON THIS AND THAT, THE TAPPING SOUND AND THE HEAVY, DROPPING POUNDS, THEN THE PATCHED CLOTHES, AND THEN THE INEVITABLE ANXIETY.

TAP TAP TAP

IT HAPPENS...EVERY NIGHT. IT WAS HAPPENING THIS SINCE MY FOREST EYE WITHIN THE WRETCHED, HAUNTED OLD HOUSE.

KLINK KLINK



I AM A WRITER BY TRADE, BUT IT IS NOT AUTHORS' IMAGINATION THAT KICKS COMING ABOUT AT THE END OF TWELVE EACH NIGHT. THAT EXPLANATION I REJECTED LONG AGO.

DOOOOKHHHH

AT THE DRIVE TO THE MINTY RELATIONSHIP ATTIC NEVER OPEN. THE FOOTBALL GEAR ON THE SHELF WENTOUT ALREADY. EACH NIGHT, I EXPECT THE DOOR TO SWING OPEN, UNLEASHING NEW HORROR.



THE SOUND, THE ANXIETY, THE AWAITING ASS HORROR, EACH NIGHT, THEY BECOME STRONGER, STRONGER, SPREADING ACROSS THE CRACKY ATTIC STAKES.



IT NEVER ENDS.

THE BREATHING THE BURNABLE ACCORDING BREATHING SILENTLY, FULMINATE, SHUT HEAVY, AND SILENTLY LURKS JUST BEFORE THE DOOR, WAITING TO POUNCE, READY TO BURST INTO MY ROOM.

ALRIGHT, EVER ALWAYS I MUST REACH FOR THE PROB I MIGHT OPEN IT, I MIGHT SEE WHAT NEW HORROR LURKS IN WAIT ON THE OTHER SIDE.



UH-HUH
UH-HUH
UH-HUH



AND ALWAYS, I AM CONFINED WITH A NEW, FAR DIFFERENT TERROR.



THE Strange, Incurable Hauntings of Terrible Phineas BOGGS



IT BEGAN A YEAR AGO...
JUST AS I AM PURCHASED
OF THE STAFFED,
DESERVING VICTORIAN
MANOR.



I PURCHASED THE MANOR FULLY AWARE THAT IT
RECEIVED THE VISIT OF MADOU, A MAN WITH MY
NAME. I KNEW THE HAUNTED ATMOSPHERE
WOULD CREATE THE PROFOUND MADOU
IN ME. MY PRACTICING WORKS... AND THAT MADOU... IN
TURN, WOULD REFLECT ITSELF IN MY WRITINGS.



I HAD BEEN PRACTISING MY CRAFT
FOR A DECADE AND, AT LAST, MY
SYSTEM WAS TELLING WELL ENOUGH
TO ALLOW CERTAIN RECENT IMPROVEMENTS.
MY LATEST, THIS ESTATE, FORTUNATELY
BELONGED TO ONE LATE
PHARAOH BOBOS.



MY EXPECTATIONS WERE DASHED.
FROM THE VERY FIRST NIGHT, A CHILL
OVERPRESENT COULDED NOT POSSIBLY... IN
A STEEL POLE OF TERROR.

I MAY NOT EVEN COMPLETED UNFOLDING WHEN I POUNCED
UPON MY REINVENTED EASES TO DODGE MY NEWEST WORKS,
BAREAS, THE HAUNTING NOVEL!



THE DOOR WAS EASY. THE MANOR WAS SHIFT AND INSPE-
CTED, AND MY FINGER'S SOARED EXACTLY OVER THE
KEYS. PREOCCUPIED, I DID NOT NOTICE THE **NOISES**,
FET SUDDENLY THE HAUNTING SOUNDS **MUST** HAVE BEEN
IN EVIDENCE... FOR THEY HAVE INVaded MY PRIVACY
EVERY NIGHT SINCE.

I AM ABSORBED IN AN INTENSE LOVE
AFFAIR BETWEEN MY FRENCH AND HER
LICANTHROPE. COUPLED WITH AN
UNCOMFORTABLE BLAST OF CHILL
AIR, SHATTERED MY PANTHERS.
CONSCIOUSLY, I SHELVED THE DIS-
COMFORT. I WANTED **NOTHING** TO
INTERFERE WITH MY PASSIONATE PROSE.



THE UNCOMFORTABLE FEELING **INCREASED**... AS THOUGH
SOMEONE WERE STARING THROUGH ME. I BECAME CON-
SCIOUS OF THE HAIR RAISING THE HAIR OF MY
NECK... CONSCIOUS TOO, OF THE LAMENTING, HUNGRY
WHITE BREATH, AND THE DARK, CREEPING SHADOWS
WITHIN.

SUDDENLY, BEFORE CHOPPING ME, I
CLAWED WORKING AND INSTANTLY, AN
ARMOR FLASHED FROM THE DARKNESS
SAVING THE DEADENING SILENCE,
HURTING MY HEAD BY **HABITS** BEFORE
ENSHIRING ITSELF IN THE WALL AT
MY SIDE.



I HAD NEVER TO SEE WHENCE THE
SHARP HORN RICOCHET, AND STANDING
UNSTAKEABLE IN THE DIM SHADOWS,
WAS A MUSK BEARER IN UNBELIEVABLY
ARMED GUARD, TO GIVE LEISURELY
RAPE CALLON THE PICTURE... **ROBBIN'**
HOOT!



STARTLED, CHOKING ON WORKS I COULD
NOT FORM, I WATCHED IN SHEEP
ZERBRA AS THE HAUNTING APPARITION
WHISKED HIS EXPRESSIONLESS FISON UP
SWEAT, VENOMOUS WITH SILENT,
BUT THICK WITH UNHOLY
COMMANDS! **EN GARDE!**



IN ONE LIGHTNING LURGE, THE BEAST WAS UPON ME. I PROVED HIS FIRST THIRST, TOPPED ON THE MOTH OF MY DEATH IN A PANIC-HAUL ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE.



THEN, IN I WATCHED IN ABJECT HORROR, THE INFECTIVE ABSORB HIS STAYING BREATH. HIS HEAD WAS HEAVILY READING FOR AN UNINTERRUPTABLE BLOW!



IN TERROR-FILLED PANIC, I TURNED TO MY PERSONAL WEAPON, THE HAMMER IN THE BACK OF THE LINE TO PRACTICE THE PUNCH ABOVE MY HEAD.



I SAT, PALPITATED, TRYING TO RECOVER FROM THE SHOCK HELPLESSLY. TO PREVENT THE NECESSARY INEVITABLE FATEFULITY, I WATCHED IN HORRIFIED AMAZEMENT AS MY ATTACKER SWUNG HIS SHOOT CLEANED INTO MY HEART . . .



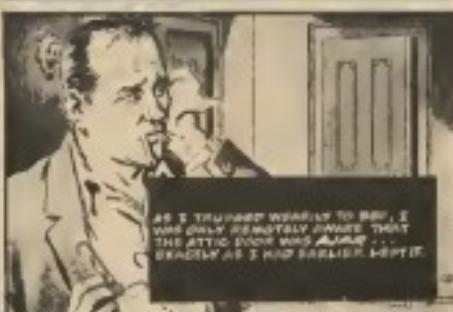
LEAVING THE PRIMY BEAST WITHIN ITS MOST CRITICAL PHASE, IT MADE HALF-PANICED TO ME, LAUGHED INSANELY AS I TRIED BRAVELY TO PLUCK THE HEAVY SPINDLE SWINGED FROM MY UNWISHERED BODY.



THEN THE ADAM KEEPS LAUGHED HARSHLY INTO AUTOMATONNESS. I FOUND MYSELF DRAFFED DOWN AND SICKENED A HEAVY FEVERISH SICKNESS BEFORE I HAD REACTED.



THERE WAS NO SHOUT COLD ON MY TYPING MACHINE... NO BLOWING BLOWS CYCLED MY PALPITATING HEART. I EXPLANED THE INCIDENT AS AN ALL-TIME STEEP DAYDREAM.



I ONLY ACCURSED BELIEVE THAT I WAS NOT FEAR... YET, ALL PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF MY ATTACKER HAD VANISHED. I COULD ONLY CONCLUDE THAT I HAD FALLEN VICTIM TO A FEVERISH, INSANE NIGHTMARE!

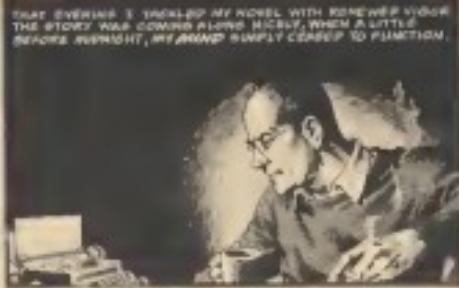
AS I TRUSTED WEAKLY TO SELL, I WAS ONLY FINALLY CONVINCED THAT THE ATTIC EVER WAS ALIVE . . . EXACTLY AS I HAD EARLIER LEFT IT.

WITH THE SWAN, I REMAINED
THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S
HAUNTING 3 HORSES AND
UNPACKED CLOTHES,
CUTTING THE RATES FOR
ALL THREE AND PREDICTION
BACHELOR'S WIFE.



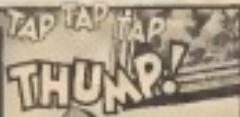
AN AMPLY ENTHUSED WIRE INCLUDES HAVE BEEN MOST WELCOME TO ASSIST IN THE PREPARATION. I WAS ANXIOUS TO RETURN TO MY HOME. NO MEMBER OF THE PREVIOUS STAFF HAD PREPARED SEVERAL NEW TARTS I WISHED TO INCORPORATE INTO THE RECIPE.

THAT EVERYONE I TALKED TO MY NOVEL WITH RENEWED VIGOR.
THE STORY WAS COMING ALIVE AGAIN. WHEN A LITTLE
BEFORE MIDNIGHT, MY BRAIN SIMPLY CEASED TO FUNCTION.



IT WAS HAVING BEEN WRITTEN, YET IT WAS ALWAYS A FRUSTRATING FEEDBACK, EXPERIENCE, MY BOAST PROFOUNDLY BLOWN OVER, DECAYED AND COMMENCESD DISAPPEARING OUT MY SIGHTS. AND I REALISED THAT FURTHER THOUGHTS OR WRITING WERE PENSELESS.

AS I SAT, HAVING A
WUNDERSCHÖNEN DAVOLZLAR,
I HEARD, NOT THE FIRST TIME,
SCHÄNDLICHE SWIMMING FROM
THE VACANT ATTIC ABOVE ME.



THE TERRIFYING GAME PIECE FURNISHED ANOTHER. I THOUGHT
THEN CAME THE HEAVY FOOTSTEPS WHICH OF FLAY UL
HTE KAHNEHE... I WAS NOW CERTAIN THAT AN UNKNOWN
CREATURE OF AT LEAST TWO HUNDRED POUNDS STALKED
THE ATTIC ABOVE ME.

Then, if began the breathing
slow, heavy, threatening.
Exhalating from behind two
inches of flannel, bottle nose.

THE CREAKING STAIRS WERE SILENT
BY THE TIME I REACHED THE ATTIC
DOOR. THE POUNDING WITHIN MY
CHEST SLDED, I ATTAINED A SEMI-
EQUILIBRIUM CALM AS I STOOD TO ONE
SIDE OF THE FEARFUL DOOR.



I SHIPPED MY AUTOMATIC,
APPREHENSIVELY WAITING FOR THE
TAXI... THE AUTHOR, THE ADVENTURE
... THE DEADLY THREATS LURKING IN
THE DARKNESS, TO SPLINTER THE
BOOK IN A MAD, SAWHORSE
PROWESS!

THE LINGER I WAITED, THE MORE
AWFUL I ENVISIONED THE THING
BEYOND THE DOOR TO BE FINALLY
COULD STAND IT NO LONGER, I
PLACED ONE HAND FIRMLY AROUND
THE DOORFRAM. THE FINGERS OF
MY REMAINING HAND STEAMED
AGAINST THE GLASS.



IN A SUDDEN EFFORT FULLY LUNGED, I YANKED THE IRON WIRE, AND TO MY HORROR, AN INSTANT BLACK ARMOUR BURST UPON ME, SENTING ME SPINNING TO THE HARSH WOODEN PLANK.

I PUNCHED IRON BLANK INTO THE NIGHTMARE'S CHESTPLATE METAL SCREAMED AGAINST METAL, AND THAT ANDRIEF APPEARED IN THE IRON ARMOUR. IT WAS WRONG. THE IRON SHELLS SHOULD HAVE RIPPED THE METAL INTO JECAP!



TWENTY POUNDS OF STEEL PLUNCHED INTO MY MIND, WHIRLING IN A VIOLENT SWIRL LIKE A WORM. I SPLINTERED BACKWARDS, TRYING DESPERATELY TO ESCAPE THE MONSTEROUS APPARITION.

TWIN LIGHTS BURNED PIERCING THROUGH MY BLACK VISION, NUMBING... STRETCHING MY VERY SOUL. THERE WAS LITTLE I COULD DO TO AVOID HAVING MY HEAD PERMANENTLY RAILED BY A RAGING MAZE.

THE MAZE SMASHED THROUGH MY NOSE WITH A THOUSAND POUNDS OF CENTRO-CEREBRAL PRESSURE. FORTUNATELY... IT KEPT GOING. I COULD HEAR A HOLLOW THUNDERING BUMP AS IT RUMBLETTED OFF THE WALL BEHIND MY HEAD.

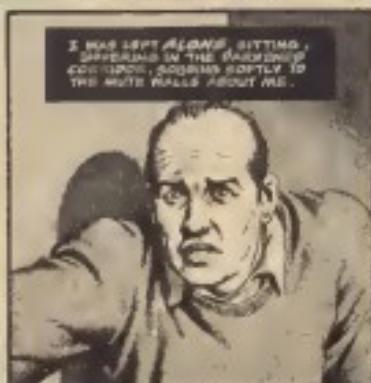


STUNNED, AWAKE, I REALIZED I HAD BEEN DAZZLED, OVERPOWERED, OVERWHELMED. I STARED AT THE SILENCE, CLAW FISTS, ONLY TO SEE HIM LAUGHING... INSANELY... HILARIOUSLY... HIS DEEP, THROATY THLAHLUNG LAUGH.



AND THEN, SLIGHTLY DISTINCTLY, HE DISAPPEARED IN DRIFTING WAVES OF MIST.

I WAS LEFT ALONE, SITTING, SILENTLY IN THE PASSAGE, CONVOLUTED, ADAMING SOFTLY TO THE MUTE WALLS ABOUT ME.



BY AND REFUSED TO ACCEPT THAT WHICH HAD HAVENTLY THROWN UPON ME. MY FIRST EXPLANATION WAS OVERWHELMINGLYS ARE, BY NATURE, CREATIVE, INNATE CREATURES. MY LIFE HAD, INDEED, BEEN AN UNDISCOVERED CHAIN OF RANDO-LUST DYSFUNCTIONS. BUT NEVER... EVER HAD I PREPARED MORE VINDICATIVE REALITIES. IT EVEN FRIGHTENED AND UPSET ME DEEPLY, AND I KNEW THAT THE ELUSIVE EXPLANATION FOR MY AFFLCTION MUST SURELY LIE IN MY WORK.

I PARKED A FITFUL SURPRISE SECOND NIGHT WITHIN MY NEW ABODE. YET THE REMAINING PARKED UNEVENTFULLY SAWE FOR MY OWN CREEPING FEARS.



I RELATED TO HIM THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S EVENTS, ISOLATING UPON MY SUSPICION THAT OVERWHELMING MIGHT BE HAVING AN HALLUCINOGENIC EFFECT UPON ME. THE MAN SEEMED MORE AMUSED THAN CONCERNED.



HE KNEW, OF COURSE, THAT I WAS THE NEW TENANT OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL MANSE. AND HE KNEW, AND WAS WILLING TO REVEAL, A CERTAIN

THE PREVIOUS RESIDENT OF MY HOME, PHARMACEUTICAL HAD BEEN ONE OF HIS REGULAR PATIENTS. THAT THE MAN HAD PASSED AWAY IN HIS MIDDOODS, CARrying NO REC-RECTION ON HIS HEALING ABILITIES. HE BOOGIE HAD BEEN NINETY-SEVEN YEARS OF AGE.

THE ACTOR'S HIGH-PITCHED, JAZZILLY EFFEMINATE VOICE WOULD SOON BECOME A SOURCE OF MAJOR HEADACHE. STYLISH, ACTIVE, ENTHUSIASMIC, THESE WERE AN INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN. BOOGIE TURNED TO START WORK TO LEAVE IN THE ACTION PICTURE INDUSTRY. HE HAD COME TO CRASH.



BOOGIE HAD BEEN AN ACTOR OF SORTS, WHO HAD OBTAINED BIT PARTS IN A COUPLE NUMBER OF FILMS. YET, THE ESSENCE OF "TALKIES" ENDURED BOOGIE'S FAMOUS CAREER.



BEATS EXCITED AT HIS WORK, AND IN TIME, LANDED CHOICE ROLES. HE, NOT PRUDENCE FAIRBANKS, BUT ESCALATED HIS CAREER. PEAKED BY HIS TURN AS THE LEAD OF "A TALE OF TWO CITIES". IN THE MARK OF ZEPHYR, HE STEPPED INTO THE DANGEROUS SCENES FOR ERIC FLYNN IN THE SEA HAWK.

NOTWITHSTANDING BOOGIE'S HOLLYWOOD CAREER HAD SUCCESS FULL AND LASTING, BUT ACTORS RETIRE FROM THEIR TALE, DURING THE FILMING OF "BOOM TOWN", BOOGIE FELTMING A DEATH INTEREST IN CLARK GABLE, OR HOLDING HALF A DOZEN KIDS, AN AEN, AND TWO LESS, WHEN HE COLLIDED WITH SEVERAL ALL TOO REAL BAALELS.



HAD PHARMACEUTICAL POSESSED A HERCULEAN VOICE, HIS REALISTIC PORTRAYALS OF THE LE BRICK ARTIST, THE FORTRESS ONE GUY OR OTHER, WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SHORTLY FOLLOWING OF CHRISTMAS DAY WOULD HAVE ACCREDITED HUM STAR STATUS.



SHORTLY THEREAFTER, BOOGIE RETIRED, AND PURCHASED THE HOME I NOW CALL MY OWN.

THE DOCTOR AND DOUGIE BECAME INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED DURING THE MANY OFFICIAL VISITS MADE TO THE OLD MAN'S HOME. THEY CONVOLVED ENOUGH LESSON AS DOUGIE SWIMMED IN HIS FILLED HOLLYWOOD EAGLETS.



PHINNUS LONG CLAIMED THAT IF THERE WERE TRULY LIVES AFTER DEATH, HE WOULD SPEND IT IN MUCH THE SAME MANNER IN WHICH HE HAD LIVED... ENACTING THE ROLES OF WHICH HE FELT SO FOND.

I SAT INSIDE THE ACCORD STUNNED BY HIS FANTASTIC REVELATION. I QUERIED THE DOCTOR FURTHER, AS TO WHETHER HE WOULD PREDICT ANY SWELL TOWARDS FELLING MEN... OR THOSE INFLUENTIAL WHO HAMMERED HIS NAME.



MARION, THE DOCTOR ANSWERED ME, WAS UNKNOWN TO HIS FRIENDS, STURDY PETRIFIED COMPATRIOTS. IF IT WERE indeed PHINNUS BOOGIE WHO APPRAISED ME AS TO HOW HE KAP IT SO FURIOUSLY TO CAFFERTHAK NOT TO FAIGHTEN.

THE DOCTOR WAS NATURALLY CURIOUS TO HEAR HIS RECALLED COMBATS AND ASKED IF HE MIGHT JOIN ME THAT NIGHT IN THE HOPE THAT FRENCHIE WOULD MIGHT ARRIVE AFTEAR.



OVERJOINED AT THE PROSPECT OF AN EVENING'S COMPANY, I INVITED THE DOCTOR FORTHWITH.

THAT NIGHT THE DOCTOR AND I ARRIVED OVERJOINED IN LOVE STORY. I TRYING MAHOGANY SO LOWLY AT BARS, AND MY FIANCÉE WAS INTERESTED DRAUTE THE DOCTOR'S WELCOME COMPANY.



THE NIGHT PREVIOUS UNPREDICTED, THE DOCTOR ANNOUNCED THAT HIS LEAVES, WITH THE BEGINNING OF THE TOWN'S CHURCH TOLLED *MINUTE* AND, AS THE LAST CHIME STRUCK, THERE'S CAME THE UNMISSABLE RUMBLE OF *MINUTE* FROM WITHIN THE ATTIC ABOVE OUR HEADS.

A WICKED DREAM DANCED IN THE DOCTOR'S EYE, AND A JONAH JAPHTHAN SPOKE IN WHOM HIS CRAZY FEATURES HIS EXCITED... ANTICIPATION MAILED HIGH.



I SURPRISED MY FRIEND AS FOOTSTEPS PLODDED HEAVILY DOWN THE CREAKY ATTIC STAIRS... BUT NEARLY STRANGLED AS HEAVY BREATHING COMMENCED ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ATTIC DOOR.

EXTRAORDINARY, I WHISPERED TO THE DOCTOR, NO EXCEPT ANTICIPATION UNTIL THIS DAY HE WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO SWING THE DOOR OPEN THE PHYSICIAN CHUCKLED THAT IT WAS LIKE THINKING TO DREAM A DRAMATIC ENTREE.



BEFORE I COULD STOP HIM, THE DOCTOR STRODE BOLDLY TO THE TERRIBLE DOOR... AND, SWINGING IT WIDE, IN A DREAM-YET-LOMING DESTINY, WAS SENT SPRAWLING OVER HIS BACK.

A BLACK DAISY FIGURE SCUNTERED FROM THE STAIRWELL AROUND AN EASY STOOL. BOTH HORSE AND DOG TROMPED MALLEY OVER THE SPRAWLED DOCTOR'S POEM... MAN AND EQUINE THUNDERED UNDILUTEDLY DOWN THE NARROW CHURCH, LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY ALL THE WHILE.



THE DOCTOR SOMEDAY MANAGED TO CHASE FOOTHOLD TWO UNDERSTOOD ABLE HOOFS AMONG HIS MONITOR HILARIOUS: *EL ZORRO!*

THE HORSE WAS SHARPLY UPON ALL FOAMES WHEN IT ARRIVED BLOWING DOWN THE DWYLLY LT HALLWAY... STRAIGHT FOR AREA 5, TURNED AND RAN THE DOCTOR SAT UPRIGHT, JOURNING UNCONTAINABLY. TO HIM, THIS, WAS THE GREATEST OF FEET.



I SAW FIRST, THE DOCTOR ROAR AND ROAR LEAP FRENZIALLY RE... GLIDING SLOWLY, PEACEFULLY INTO THE AIR... ONLY TO DISAPPEAR BEFORE THEY TOUCHED DOWN AT THE FAR END OF THE CORRIDOR.

FOR SOME MOMENTS, WE SAT IN THE HARP-CRISPED HALLWAY. HE LAUGHED IN SILENCE... I, MYSELF, TRIED TO STUFF UP THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWS. IT'S WICK TO MY LIFE.



THE DOCTOR THANKED ME FOR A WONDERFUL EVENING'S ENTERTAINMENT, AND ASKED IF HE MIGHT COME ANOTHER TIME. I ASSURED HIM, HE WOULD BE A MOST WELCOME GUEST UPON THE CHIMNEY OF ANY AND ALL MIDNIGHT HOURS.

IT HAS BEEN A FULL YEAR SINCE I TOOK UP RESIDENCE WITH THIS PASSIONATELY ENTERTAINING GHOST, THOUGH MOST NIGHTS I HAVE BEEN TREATED TO A MOST ASTONISHING EXHIBITION...



THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN EVEN THE MOST JOYFUL COMPANY WAS UNWELCOME. ON THESE OCCASIONS, I HAVE PRAYED FOR THE POSTFALLS TO EAT AND THE HEAVY BREAKING TO CRASH... AND I HAVE NOT OPENED THE DOOR.



ONE AND UNCONDITIONAL GHOST INVITABLY OVERTAKES ME AND I SET TO MAKE UP FOR MY REMARKS THE FOLLOWING EVENING, BY RESPONDING TO THE POSTFALLS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND WITH GREAT

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, I WAS TREATED TO A VISIT FROM THE CHAIN CUTTERS, SURELY THE CHEERIEST PART OF FARMERS TO DICKENS PROUD.



ACCOMPANIED AS I WAS TO MY NIGHTLY VICTIM, I WAS STILL CHILLED TO THE BONES AT THE SIGHT OF MY PERSONAL ENEMIES ENACTING THE ROLE OF A GHOST.

I AM DEEPLY AND WHILLY AWAKED AT THE MANY AND WILLY CHANCES IN WHICH MY HOST APPEARS. SOLELY WHILE ENTERTAINING A YOUNG LADY FRIEND FOR THE EVENING, I LEFT THE ATTIC DOOR Ajar inadvertantly...



THE WOMAN WAS STUNMED TO FIND THE ADMIRABLE AND FAMOUS SON OUT OF DISFACADE AT OLD 500, LEAVING HIM FOR HER WARTIME DISPLAY OF EAST TERRACES AND, SHE SAID, "LATER."

HAVING A RESIDENT HAUNTED HOME HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING EXPERIENCE. TO SAY THE LEAST, FARMERS' BOOGIES' VISITS HAVE INSPIRED... MY WRITINGS TREMENDOUSLY... GRANTED ME MORE FLAIR AND ENTHUSIASM FOR CHILD-GOTHIC SURPRISES...



I COMPLETED MY NOVEL, *BAKING THE KINNABLE JARS*, MY PUBLISHER LOVED IT. EVEN NOW IT IS OUTSHINING ALL MY OTHER NOVELS EXCEPT, MAYBE, AND PERHAPS UNCONSCIOUSLY, ABOUT MY NEW BOOK.



THE PLAT INVOLVES A MURKIE WHO PRACTICALLY AN ABS. VICTORIAN MANSE... SO, CAN YOU FIND IT HAUNTED BY AN ENTHUSIASTIC, ENTERTAINING AND SOMEWHAT SHOWOFF GHOST?

END

THE COMIC BOOKS

By Joe Brancatelli

There is an unwritten truth about the comic-book business that distinguishes it as a practicing writer interested in the success of well-written material, frightens me as a charter member of the quality-all-themself school, convinces me as a dyed-in-the-doller capitalist and scares the hell out of me as a comic-book fan.

The unwritten truth is a simple one: Comic books could develop into the most creative medium in the art world and still go the way of *Collier's*, or *Life* or *Look* or any defunct magazine.

Many of the sharper people in the industry have known for years that the key to the survival of the comic book lies not solely in artistic creativity, but in the effective utilization of the nation's notoriously poor distribution network.

Along with just about every other consumer magazine in circulation today, comic books suffer from very poor distribution from publisher to eventual buyer. The labyrinth that is the nation's distribution system has been teetering on the brink of total collapse for decades of years, continually unable to bear the brunt of tackadocious publishers, inefficient national distributors and monopolistic local independents. And while some magazines in the narrow special interest field can survive and occasionally prosper within the creaking system, the high-volume, low-profit nature of the comic-book business is being ripped apart.

In simplest terms, every comic book ever published could be on a par with *Hawthorne*, but it will never sell because the distribution system has broken down.

Being a monumental act of the elusive god of publishing guide—or a concerned, multi-billion dollar magazine industry drive—we're stuck with the system as it now exists. However, there is an effective and tested way for the comic-book industry to deal with some of the problems and, if nothing

else, stave off a disastrous, short-range collapse of sales.

One remedy for the creaking system—the one we could quickly and cheaply be grafted onto the comic world—was stumbled upon years ago by Generoso Pope, the prosperous and charming publisher of *The National Enquirer*. Possibly the least credible—but most widely read—weekly periodical in the world, TNE still uses the Pope formula to give it the circulation edge over his two groupies—namely, the schlocky *National Star* and *Time*, Inc.'s light, airy and superficial People.

Basically, Pope employs his own 900-person staff of part-time and full-time employees, all with the sole task of making sure that *The National Enquirer* is well represented on the nation's retail periodical racks. While TNE, like every fair-selling magazine, is distributed by a major national company which specializes in periodical dissemination, Pope long ago saw the need for in-house employees to service retailers directly.

Best of all, the system works: *The National Enquirer* sells about 5 million copies a week at 50 cents each—an incredible 260 million copies a year. And, according to *Good Housekeeping* editor John Mack Carter, the retail-check system spells the difference between TNE and dozens of other competing weekly gossip tabloids.

Writing in *Fate*, the magazine of magazine management, the well-respected and powerful Carter said: "The importance of this regular policing has been proven in tests of retail display left without checkups. The weekly sale copies without any checkup falls 40 per cent."

Pope, Carter concluded, has a dream of selling 80 per cent of all the copies he prints (most magazines are profitable at the 45 per cent mark, while a 50 per cent sale is considered exceptional). "This is not an impossible dream," Carter concludes,

"as *(National Enquirer)* sales have gone as high as 89 per cent and rarely fall at low as 70 per cent."

To understand the significance of Pope's retail checking system, it is necessary to understand how comic books and other magazines get from the publisher to you. After a magazine is published, it is usually sent directly from the printer to a string of local "independent distributors" who have agreed to distribute the book under contract with a "national distributor." Since most local distributors have a geographic monopoly (developed gradually through the years and presently being contested in the court system), he not only receives almost all the magazines published, he gets all the comic books published by National, Marvel, Charlton, Gold Key, Harvey, Archie and Warren.

As you might suspect, neither he nor his string of retailers can adequately merchandise all the magazines and all the comics. More often than not, many books get lost in the shuffle, never leave the distributor's warehouse or never make it from the retailer's bundle to his limited display space. Moreover, since comic books offer both independent distributors and retailers an embarrassingly poor profit when compared to more prestigious books like *Time*, *Playboy*, *Esquire*, *Carmagnola* or the others, the lower-color cheapies are most often left behind.

In 1974, when I was on a cross-country assignment for the *Gannett* newspaper chain, I surveyed 50 independent distributors, and it was their consensus that only about one comic book in four printed actually reaches the retail shelves.

Naturally, even if the comic book is the greatest thing since sliced bread creatively, the distribution matrix almost surely guarantees dismal sales.

Since they are the most severely affected publishers, the owners' com-

ic-book producers would be wise to institute Pope's system for their own protection. Unlike Pope, they wouldn't even have to pay people to do their checking. There are thousands of fans across the country who would gladly volunteer to check newstands, if for no other reason than to assure that they themselves can purchase the comic book they want when it is published. Should some farsighted publisher be so generous as to offer his volunteer checkers a bonus in the way of free merchandise, he would assure a solid loyalty and devotion to retailer-checking, benefiting unknown in business circles.

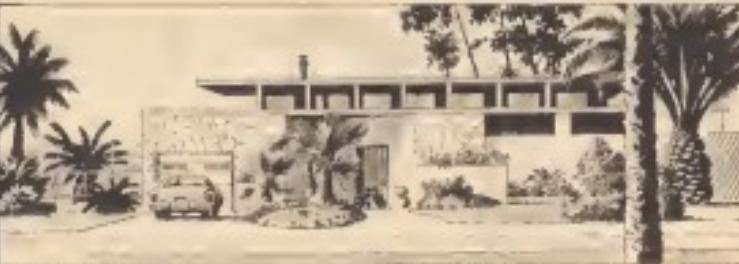
The advantages are obvious for both the publisher and the fan, as well as the distributor. For the publisher, once aware of which retail outlets are undersupplied, oversupplied or badly supplied, he can act to rectify the situation quickly, improve his sales markedly—and possibly even keep his job when the stockholders ask him what he's done for them lately. For the fan, he has the satisfaction of knowing the comic-book business needs him as well as just his dollars, and he is also assured of a relatively even flow of comic books. And for the distributor (and retailer), they have an opportunity to increase their own flagging profits and have eager-beaver unpaid volunteers doing the work they should have done a long time ago.

However trivial, but the damn thing makes sense. No wonder the only comic-book attempt at a similar system (in 1971), National's DU Survey Club, went down in flames due to corporate deceit, stupidity and neglect.

If only Generoso Pope published comic books.

Joe Brancatelli, a long-time consumer fan and collector, is an editor and reporter at *Entertainment Publications*, the nation's largest chain of business newspapers.

I PULL INTO MY
DRIVeway AND CUT
THE ENgINE. I SIT
THERE ALONE
FOR A MOMENT,
BREATHING QUIETLY.
HESHANT TO LEAVE
THE SANCTITY AND
SOLITUDE AN AUTO-
MOBILE CAN OFFER.
MY RIGHT HAND, I
NOTICE, IS
TREMBLING
SLIGHTLY.

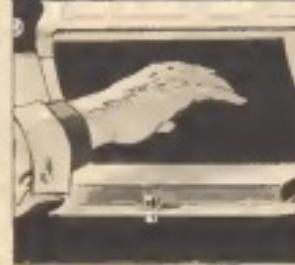


MY EYES FOCUS ON THE SUN-BAKED WOOD OF THE GARAGE
DOOR. ABSHINTLY, I REMEMBER GWIN ASKING ME TO PAINT IT.
I PULL IN A RADED BREATH. IT WILL NEVER GET PAINTER NOW.



MY THROAT MOVES CONVULSIVELY.
THE DULL BEGINNINGS OF A HEAD-
ACNE PECK AT THE BASE OF MY
SKULL. I NEED A DRINK.

"YOU SITTING HERE THINKING,"
MY MIND SAYS. "THIS LOOKS EUS-
PIANIC." I REACH OUT MY HAND
CAREFULLY TO THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT
AND OPEN IT. MY
FINGERS HESITATE A MOMENT,
THEN REACH INSIDE...



Process of elimination

STORY: BRUCE JONES/ART: RUSS HEATH

I SLIP THE GUN QUIETLY INTO MY TROUSERS AND SWING OPEN THE DOOR. THE FIGHT WALK FEELS ALIEN UNDER MY FEET. IT'S SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES I'M WALKING IN. I'M ASLEEP, I'M DREAMING...



I NEARLY COLLAPSE WITH RICHARD'S RACKET TRAIL. ANOTHER EVENING I WOULD WALK AROUND IT, CONFIRM RICKY LATER AND GIVE HIM A LECTURE TONIGHT. I PLACE IT CAREFULLY LOWDOWN ON THE GRASS. DESIGN ME.



MY HUNGRY TREMBLE VIOLENTLY AGAIN AS I REACH FOR THE POOR-KNOWN THE WORLD GOES SUDDENLY WHITE. A HORSE OF HORROR PINS INTO MY STOMACH. I CAN'T DO THIS! I CAN'T! I CLOSE MY EYES TIGHT, GRITTING MY TEETH, TRYING TO CONJURE UP IMAGES OF HOME, TRYING TO FIND AWARE STRENGTH



THE MOMENT PASSES. I FORCE ANOTHER BREATH AND ENTER THE HOUSE. THE GUN IS A LEAD BRICK AGAINST MY STOMACH.



GAWN MOVES CLOSE FOR A KISS. MY HEART NEARLY THUNDERED THROUGH MY CHEST--THE GUN/ SHELL FEEL THE PROTRUDING BULK OF THE --



WELL! THAT WAS NICE! PRELUDE OF THINGS TO COME?



I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED,
AND BROWNED POTATOES AND
BROCCOLI AND MAYBE EVEN
CHERRY COBBLER!

MY
FAVORITES?
WHAT'S THE
OCCASION?

LET'S JUST
SAY I KNOW
HOW TO HOLD
ON TO A
MAN.

SHE ISN'T MAKING IT EASY FOR ME... A NUMMING
THOUGHT FLARES SUDDENLY IN MY MIND -- DOES
SHE KNOW? COULD SHE HAVE GUESSED?

WHERE'S
RICKY?

SPENDING THE
NIGHT AT JERRY
KILPATRICK'S
THE EVENING IS
OURS, LOVE.

THAT SOUNDS
GREAT! I'LL... I'LL
JUST WASH UP.

DINNER
WILL BE
READY IN
FIVE."

RICHARD AT THE KILPATRICKS--
IT'S GOING TO BE A PROBLEM.
WELL, I'LL JUST HAVE TO CROSS
THAT WHEN I COME TO IT.
QUICKLY I OPEN THE DOOR TO THE
NURSERY AND LOOK IN ON
JEANIE.

I STARE AT THE SMALL, Huddled FORM OF MY
DAUGHTER. THE TEARS WELL UP WITHOUT
WARNING. HER IMAGE BLURRING...LIFE WITH-
OUT JEANIE IS UNIMAGINABLE.



I KNOCK THE HEEL OF MY SHIRT TROUGH ACROSS
MY EYES. I WON'T BREAKDOWN NOW. I DON'T! I
TURN ON THE FAUCET IN THE BATHROOM AND STARE
AT THE LITTLELESS EYES IN THE MIRROR. I DON'T KNOW
THIS MAN...HE'S A STRANGER TO ME...A LIFE-
LESS SMELL THAT TALKS AND MOVES. THE
WATER BRUSHES MY HANDS.



DINNER IS AN AGONY. MY APPETITE IS VAPID. YET I MUST
MAKE AN EFFORT... MUST KEEP UP APPEARANCES. THE
STRANGER IN MY CLOTHES LOOKS ACROSS THE TABLE AT
MY WIFE. SMILES AND CHEWS FOOD MECHANICALLY.

DEAR GOD...
SHE CAN'T KNOW!
SHE CAN'T!







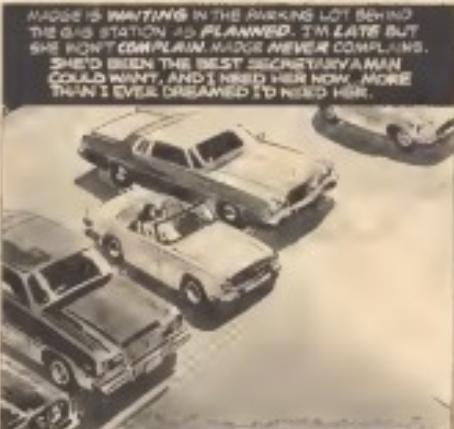
IT'S OVER. I'VE DONE IT. SHE'S GONE, AND INcredibly my FIRST THOUGHTS AREn't OF REMORSE OR GUILT OR SHAME... IT'S THE TERRIBLE RECOGNITION OF THE Awful POWER I FEEL... TO SNUFF OUT A HUMAN LIFE THAT SIMPLY...





CAN A MAN DO SUCH A THING?
I ASK MYSELF. CAN A MAN
BRASE HIS ENTIRE PAST IN ONE
WINK? IS IT HUMANLY POSSI-
BLE? I RAISE THE GUN
EVENLY OVER THE TOP OF MY
DAUGHTER'S CRIB...

...AND I KNOW
THE ANSWER.





TOMORROW WE'LL BE FAR AWAY FROM BAKERSVILLE AND ALL IT'S LITTLE PROBLEMS!

IT'S AFTER FIVE, CHRIS. WE BETTER GO.

ARE WE STOPPING HERE?

I THOUGHT WE'D SPEND OUR LAST MORNING IN BAKERSVILLE WATCHING THE SUNRISE. THERE'S A GREAT VIEW FROM HERE...



CHRIS, I... I MEANT IT BACK THERE WHEN I THANKED YOU. I'VE WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR AGIN THIS... FOR PUTTING UP WITH ME... FOR NOT LAUGHING AT ME BECAUSE... BECAUSE I WAS A MIRGIN. IT WAS A TREMENDOUS FAIRY TO ASK AND...

HONEST, I WANTED TO DO IT! AND ONLY A FOOL WOULD LAUGH AT SOMEONE LIKE YOU!

ANYWAY... I WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW MUCH IT MEANS TO ME...

WHAT TIME IS IT?

ALMOST SIX THIRTY...



OH GOD!... OH GOD CHRIS!... I DON'T THINK I CAN DO IT! I DON'T THINK I CAN DO THIS AGAIN WITH THEM!

IM SCARED!
IM SCARED, CHRIS!
OH GOD, FORGIVE ME,

THERE THERE... TAKE IT EASY!





I LOOK AT MY WATCH, IT'S JUST SIXTY-NINETY. I LEAN BACK HEAVILY INTO THE SOFT UPHOLSTERY. THE STRANGER IS GONE. I AM WHOLE AGAIN.

WELL...ONE THING FOR SURE... I GOT THE BEST SEAT IN TOWN...



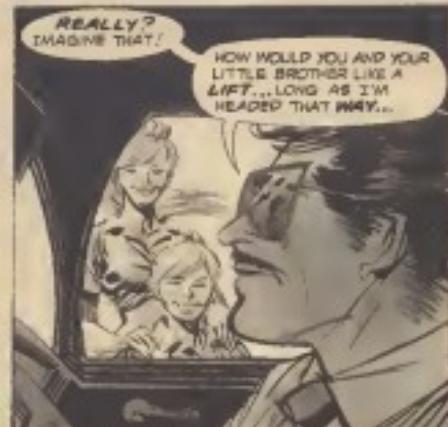


END

country pie

"I SEE THE VICTIM NOW...I SEE THE VICTIM,
SHERIFF...THE KILLER IS APPROACHING RAPIDLY
ON A COUNTRY ROAD SOMEWHERE...CLOSE
BY...FAIRLY CLOSE BY...BUT I CAN'T QUITE
DEFINE IT YET..."

"JUST TAKE YOUR TIME, MRS. WHITNEY...
THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. TRY TO
DESCRIBE THE LANDSCAPE AROUND
THE SCENE...WE NEED THAT INFORMATION
VERY BADLY..."



"THE KILLER HAD MADE CONTACT... THE VICTIM IS NEAR TO HIM IN THE CAR NOW... THE SCENE IS SET..."

"AFTER GIRL!... HOP RIGH' IN, PLENTY OF ROOM HERE IN THE FRONT."

"YOU MUST DESCRIBE THE SURROUNDING STEEPNESS, MRS WHITNEY OR WE CAN'T GET A BEAD ON 'EM."

"ABOUT SIX MILES DOWN THE ROAD."

"SURE IS A HOT DAY!"

"HOW'D YOU AND YOUR BROTHER LIKE TO STOP FOR A SODA POP WHEN WE GET TO CLIFFTON?"

"I DON'T THINK SO, MISTER... WE'RE SPEDDIN' HOME STRAIGHT AWAY..."

"THE CAR IS MOVING FASTER... HARD TO SEE... LOOKS LIKE MOUNTAINS, HILLS AND... YER' DOGWOOD TREES..."

"THAT SOUND FAMILIAR TO YOU, JAKE?"

"SURE, SHERIFF... IT'S JUST OVER 300 MILE THIS TERRITORY!"

"I HAVE A LITTLE GIRL AT HOME ABOUT YOUR AGE... PRETTY AS A PICTURE, EXCEPT SHE HAD DARK HAIR LIKE HER MOTHER. SHE'LL BE SIXTEEN NEXT MONTH. THAT ABOUT YOUR AGE..."

"YES, SIR."

"YOU'LL HAVE TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, MRS WHITNEY. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN TELL US?"

"NO... NO... IT'S JUST A COUNTRY ROAD LINE THOUSANDS OF OTHERS SOMEWHERE FAIRLY CLOSE... I'M SORRY..."









END

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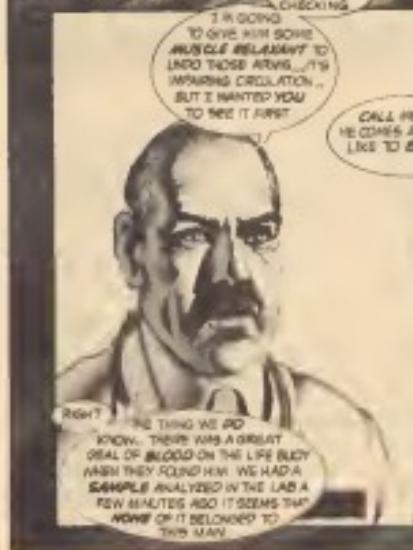
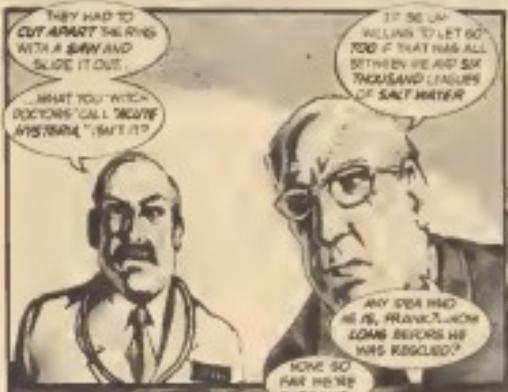
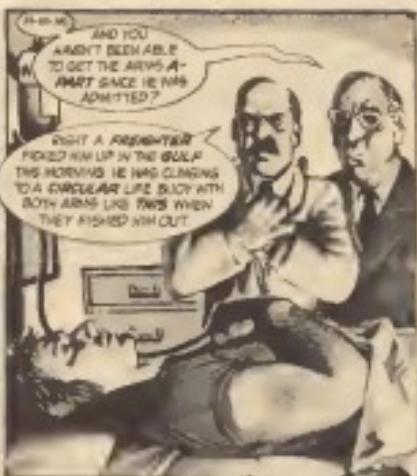


LOOK AT ALL OF THOSE MAGNIFICENT COVERS! EVERY MAGAZINE IS WORTH HAVING FOR THOSE FULL-COLOR WORKS OF ART THEMSELVES! BUT WHAT ABOUT THE GORY INTERIORS? EACH GRIESEUS TALE IS BETTER THAN THE NEXT! "THE DAMNED THING" BY GRAY MORROW. "RUDE AWAKENING" BY ALICE TOTH. EANDO BINDER'S "ADAM LINK" SERIES, ILLUSTRATED BY JOE ORLANDO. "BEAST MAN" BY STEVE OITKO. OM ADKIN'S "THE BECKONING BEYOND." NEAL ADAMS' "THE TERROR BEYOND TIME." REMEMBER JEFF JONES' "ANGEL OF DOOM" AND SUTTON'S "IMAGE OF WAX?" HOW ABOUT JERRY GRAMM'S "THE GREEN HORNET" CAST AND VOODOO GOOL? DON'T FORGET TO ENJOY CROM-MAS' GREAT "CLIMBERS OF THE TOWER?" AND HOW ABOUT WALLY WOOD'S "THE COSMIC ALL?" DID YOU LIKE JOSE BEA'S "LIKE A PHONE BOOTH, LONG AND NARROW?" EVERY CREEPY ISSUE IS A COMIC COLLECTOR'S MUST! DON'T MISS OUT!

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PROLOGUE



WIDE



AS IN A DREAM... LANGSTON AWARE OF SLOW-MOTION DELIRIUM—HE WATCHED THE TINY LITTLE CRUISE SHIP SETTLE SLOWLY BEHIND THE ROLLING WAVES. ALL THEIR PLANS—ALL THEIR DRAWS, ALL THEIR FUTURE—SERTINELY DISAPPEARED IN SILENT RESIGNATION TO THE GRIM PEGGY.

YET THIS WAS REALITY. THIS WAS THE FUTURE—FARAWAY ALL THE FUTURE THEY WOULD EVER KNOW. HE LOOKED ACROSS THE LIFE RING AT PEGGY AND FELT THE FIRST REAL HEAVE OF FEAR DRIVE INTO HIS HEART....

UNTIL NOW, THERE HADN'T BEEN TIME FOR FEAR. ONLY A SORT OF MILDLY ANXIETY URGENT TO HAVE THE RIGHT DECISIONS, WHETHER THE BOAT AND DERRYL REACHED THE BOAT AND HOME. IN THE END, THERE WAS HARDLY TIME, EVEN FOR THAT....



HANGING HERE NOW IN THE WARM SWIMMING HOLE, THERE WAS AT LAST THE CHANCE TO PUT THEIR SITUATION IN PERSPECTIVE... AND THE PERSPECTIVE LINES WERE CLEAR CUT. ENDLESS GREEN SEA BELOW THROREW BLUE SKY ABOVE. THE GREATFUL RADIANTONOUS CLOUDS OF IT SETTLED OVER HIM.



"TRY TO FIND US," HE SAID, NOT BELIEVING IT, NOT LETTING THE DESPAIR SHOW IN HIS VOICE AND THE SMALL, CALM CONVICTION OF NEARLY ALMOST BROUGHT TEARS TO HIS EYES IN THE INSTANTES OF THEIR SILENCE. "OF COURSE THEY WILL..."



HE CAME ABOUT PLUTELLY FOR SOME KIND OF ANSWER. THERE WAS HOPE THERE HADN'T BEEN TIME TO GIVE THEM A BLANKET OR SHIRT. THE BOAT HADSONE DOWN LIKE A ROCK HE CAUGHT HER LOOKING AT HIM. "MY SHIRT," SHE SAID.



HE LOOKED AT HIS WATCH. IT WAS THE SUN HOLLOW FULL STRENGTH IN A COUPLE OF HOURS. THAT WOULD BE THEIR ANEST PREDIUM. IF PRESENT, THE BOTTLE OF GINGERALE ALIVE. HE D'WANDED TO GRAB THOSE LAST THEM TWO OR THREE DAYS. BUT THE SUN



HE SMILED AT HER AND REALIZED SUDDENLY HOW MUCH HORROR THERE COULD BE FOR THEM WITHOUT EITHER OF THE OTHER THREE FOR COMPANY. HE WOINED AROUND THE RING AND UNZIPPED THE SHIRT FROM HER WAIST. I LOVE YOU, HE THOUGHT.



LOOKING ONE ARM ABOUT THE RING, HE TENSED THE QUESAR MATERIAL, IN HALF AND SKINNY PART OF IT CAME HIS HEAD AND SHOULDERS. THE OTHER HALF OVER HIS OWN. IT WAS INERT AND HEAVILY CUT OUT THE WATER, BUT MIGHT PROTECT THEM FROM THE SUN RAYS. HE WONDERED IMMEDIATELY HOW COULD IT WOULD GET AT NIGHT.

PISOG COULDN'T SWIM. THE FACT WAS APPREHENSIVE IN HIS MIND. THE JUDGMENT THEY'D ABANDONED HIM. HIS VIRT FIRST SWIM HAD BEEN TO LASH HER ARMS AND WAIST TO THE PHALANTICATING THE EVENTUAL NEED FOR BREATH. MOVING ABOUT NOW ON THE SURFING RING, HE WAS GLAD HER THOUGHT TO BRING THE CORP.



ONE SMALL SWALLOW IT WAS
MADDENING NOT TO SWELL IT
GRATELY. HIS HEART WENT OUT TO
HER, BUT HE RECAPPED THE
BOTTLE. HE SCANNED THE HORIZON
FOR THE HUNDREDTH TIME FOR
SOME SIGN OF A SHIP; FOR THE
HUNDREDTH TIME HE SAW ONLY
WATER. HIS ARMS ACHED.



"I WISH TWILIGHT WOULD
COME QUICKLY BUT HE'D
HOPED NOT AS SOON AS
THIS. BY TWO-O'CLOCK HE
COULD ALMOST NO LONGER
PESSIMISTIC. SHE HADN'T COMPLAINED
BUT HE'D CAUGHT HER
LOOKING HER PALE, DRY
LIPS—MAYBE SWALLOWING
WITH PAIN. HE DRAW UP THE
GINGER ALE..."



THEY TOLD STORIES, JOKES, NODDED...
LAUGHED ABOUT DRINKING IN THEIR
CLOTHES. HE RESCUED THE SKIRT
HALVES SEVERAL TIMES AND UNTIED HER
OTTER TO KEEP HER BLOOD CIRCULATING.
THEY WAITED. THE SUN DIPPED TOWARD
THE SEA. THEY SWIRLED MORE GINGER ALE
AS THEY WAITED. BURGER DAZZLED IT THEM
MORE FREQUENTLY. THEY WAITED.

NIGHT. HE HAD NEVER SEEN SO
MANY STARS. BLESSEDLY THE WATER
REMAINED WARM. THEY TALKED LESS.
IT MADE THEM THIRSTY. SHE LAUGHED
"MOON RIVER." THE KING ROCKED.
ROCKED. HE CROUCHED HIMSELF MORNING
HE BIT HIS LIP TO STAY AWAKE. SHE
SIGHED TIRED."

THEY COUNTED SHOOTING STARS.
THOUGHT ABOUT THE MISTRESSES OF
THE HEAVENS. IT WAS COMFORTING TO
LOOK STRAIGHT UP AND SEE NOTHING
BUT STARS...SOMETHING YOU COULD
DO ON YOUR OWN BACK PORCH. THEY
THOUGHT OF WOMEN. HER HAIR BOBBED
REPEATEDLY. HE WATCHED SWIMMING, AS
SHE SWAM AWAY TO SLEEP.



HE HADN'T ABANDONED SINCE HE WAS TEN.
HE DID SO NOW WITHOUT EVEN REASSE
MENT. THEN HE WAITED HER A LONG
WHILE. SHE LOCATED LIES A LOST
LITTLE GIRL. "I'M SORRY, PEPPY," HE
THOUGHT, KNOWING IT WASN'T HIS
FAULT BUT UNABLE TO HELP THINKING
IT. THE KING ROCKED...HE COULDN'T
REMEMBER DOING ONE!





He sat... lost in the endless hills of pain. He stared... held a frenzied puppet air. To his agony there was no proper act to give respite. More than ever he demanded time. He tried to shed... he could not give the task to her. Deep voice... he could not give the task to her.



He could not bring himself to cut her free. He would see that she was buried properly on shore or put with her. He cried for hours knowing even in his agony that it was a mistake... it was... his previous adventure... it'll drown myself... he thought, but he didn't

He slipped into a kind of delirium. He kept imagining himself letting loose of the ring, spiraling quietly into the light green, twin diamond pattern, then purple drifting... gently peacefully held blank open his eyes and find himself still clutching it somehow, Peggy staring at him with dull, lost eyes.

He became dead inside. He hardly noticed the ache in his arms, in his stomach, the rocking ring-maintained him but he grew thirsty at noon and hauled up the diamond all to his shame he found himself thanking her last thrice as loud now... and then not caring...

Once he looked up from his stupor to see a gull perched on his wife's head. His mouth dropped open and he held there staring motionless at it. Then he noticed one of Peggy's eyes was missing and the dark stain on the gull's beak. He screamed horribly and it flew away.





HE WAS HALF-ASLEEP IN LATE AFTERNOON WHEN THE RING PULLED VIOLENTLY ONCE. HE JUMPED UP SHARPLY, TRYING TO ORGANIZE HIS THOUGHTS. "WAD TELLIN' SOMETHIN' TA ROCK?" SNORE. "HE BOZED ABOUT—THE OCEAN WAS PLACID."



THEN THE RING PULLED HIM UNDER.



A SHARK'S MOUTH SWIMMED OVER HIM. HE BOZED BACK UP, DROWNING WITH WATER STILL HOLDING THE RING. WHAT WAS HAPPENING?



HE BOZED BACK UP, DROWNING WITH WATER STILL HOLDING THE RING. WHAT WAS HAPPENING?



LATER HE REALIZED IT WAS A STRIPED TIGER HE DOULD HAVE EATEN. THE BULL CAME DOWN. HE ARRANGED THE PADDLE IN FRONT OF HIM AND WAITED FOR ANOTHER BIRD. NONE CAME. HE LICKED HIS LIPS. I DON'T CARE ANYMORE... I'M GOING TO ONE...!



BROWNED A DARK SHADOW SLIPPED BY TEENIE GRABBED HIM



A SHAG OF FISHWOODS SEIZED HIS BODY. HE GRABBED THE PADDLE TO GET FREE, JERKING HIS HEAD IN ALL DIRECTIONS. A HUNDRED FEET FROM HIM AGAIN THE SURFACE HE HEARD HIMSELF WAWAMPER.



A BUZZIN FEET FROM HIM THE FIN DISAPPEARED. HE OPENED HIS EYES. UNDER THE STANDING SALT WATER, AND SWIMMING AT THE SLEEK BEAK WITH THE PADDLE. HE ASSESSED THE RING PULLED HIM UNDER.

HE SURFED COUGHING AND
BREATHING AND SPITTING UP BLOOD.
HE JERKED THE PADDLE AWAY,
SEARCHING WITH TEAR-FILLED EYES.

THE SHARK LOOKED BENEATH HIM HE
WAITED THIS TIME... WAITED UNTIL THE
MOUTH OPENING APPEARED, THEN HE
DIPPED DOWN AWAY. THE PADDLE STRUCK
BOOMTIDE.

HE PULLED THE PADDLE UP, THE SMOOTH
WOOD BURPED IN A DAZZLING STONK. HE
WIPE AT HIS EYES AND STARED BENEATH
THE SURFACE. THE SHARK WAS GONE -- HIS
PEGGY'S LEFT LEG JUST BELOW THE KNEE.
HE SCREAMED HIS FRUSTRATION, WAITING FOR
THE SHARK TO RETURN. IT DIDN'T.



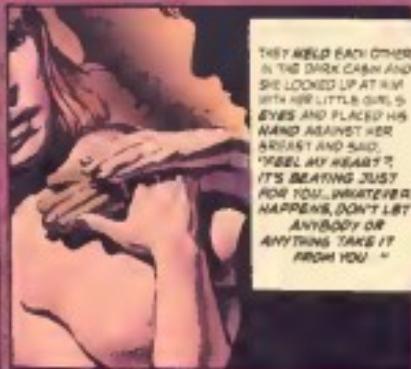
SUNSET SET THE ENTIRE SKY AFIRE. SOMEWHERE HIS BRAIN REGISTERED ITS BEAUTY BUT HE DON'T FEEL IT. THE RING ROCKED DEAFENINGLY. I HAVEN'T EATEN IN TWO DAYS, HE THOUGHT. ... I'M DYING IT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE HOW THAT HAD EVER BEEN. HE CLOSED HIS EYES AND SAW PEGGY ON THE BON OF THEIR VACATION...



HE HUGGED THE ROCKING RING IN HIS ARMS AND THE RING BECAME PEGGY ROCKING HIM AGAINST HER BREAST, RUNNING HER NAILS THROUGH HIS HAIR, ASKING HIM WHAT HE'D LIKE FOR DINNER...



"I WANT YOU FOR DINNER," HE SAID AND SHE WINKED A KINKER AT HIM IN ADOCA REPROACHMENT AND HE TOOK THE RING AND KISSED IT AND HER PALM AND HER CHEEK AND HER LIPS, SOFT AND WARM AND SWEET HE SAID, "LET'S SHOP DINNER..."



THEY HELD EACH OTHER IN THE DARK CABIN AND SHE LOOKED UP AT HIM WITH HER LITTLE GIRL'S EYES AND PLACED HIS HAND AGAINST HER BREAST AND SAID, "FEEL MY HEART? IT'S BEATING JUST FOR YOU... WHATEVER HAPPENS, DON'T LET ANYBODY OR ANYTHING TAKE IT FROM YOU."

HE FELT THE SHIP JUMPING ABSURDLY
BENEATH THEM... GAVE
THE SICKENED LOOK OF
PAIN IN PROSPER'S EYES.
HE KNEW AGAIN THE
AGONY OF RUMMING
ABOUT DECK. THE
SHOCK OF FEELING
SALT WATER LAP ABOUT
HIS ANKLES...

AGAIN HE RACED TO THE BOW WITH HER, JUMPING
ON THE SWAMPED DECK... AND NOW HE GRABBED THE
SOFA BOTTLE, THE LENGTH OF CORD, THE HEAVY LIFE
RING... AND HE PUSHED AWAY WITH LONG EVEN
STROKES, LOOKING BACK, WATCHING THE
IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENING...



A MIND-PIERCING SCREECH BROKE HIS REVERIE.
HE JOLTED UP, EYES FIXING CONFUSILY ON HIS
WIFE'S CORPSE... AS IF SHE MIGHT SUPPLY ANSWERS.
HIS STOMACH TWISTED. HER FACE WAS HALFWAY
THE SKY WAS FILLED WITH GULLS...

HE GRABBED UP THE PADDLE, LOOKING DOWN
AS HE DID SO HIS SKIN DREW TIGHT. THE SEA
WAS ALIVE WITH SHARKS...

AN ENORMOUS BLUE-SHAPED BRUISE
BITT HIS LEG. THE RING JERKED,
JARRING HIS TEETH. HE STRUCK
OUT WITH THE BROKEN PADDLE THE
WATER TASHMED, ROARED. ANOTHER
SHAPE RUSHED UP BENEATH HIM. THE RING SNAPPED, TORN
FROM HIS GRASP...



HE LURCHED THROUGH THE WATER,
GASPING... CAUGHT THE RING JUST
AS IT JERKED AGAIN VIOLENTLY.
HE CHINED OUT... HIS VOICE LIKE A
DRY RATTLE. HIS WIFE BODY
BOBBLED AND JUMPED, ARMS
FLOPPING IN ALIVE PROTEST
WE'RE BETTERAVING HER...

HE STRUCK DOWNWARD WITH THE PADDLE AGAIN AND AGAIN, SCREAMING AT THEM. THE SEA TURNED TO WHITE FOAM AROUND HIM... THEN AND THE PADDLE WAS INREMOVED FROM HIS HANDS. HE FOUND IT FLOATING VERTICALLY... RETRIEVED IT... DARBED AGAIN...



THE SHARK MOVED OFF MOMENTARILY. HE LUNG IN THE WATER EXHAUSTED, CHEST HEAVING. THEN HE SCREAMED AGAIN. HIS WIFE WAS COMPARED WITH GULLS. HE LIFTED THE PADDLE WITH LEADEN ARMS AND SWUNG MADLY AT THEM.

THIS MOMENT HE PULLED TO CATCH HIS BREATH. THE GULLS RETURNED. HE TRIED TO YELL BUT HIS VOICE MOLLONT INCHES ANMORE. HE WAVED HIS ARMS WEAFLY BUT THEY ONLY AGGRAVATED THEIR FEATHERS AND CONTINUED THEIR GRINDING PLUCKING...



THE RING JERKED AND THEY FLEW OFF SCRATCHING. THE DARK SHAPES WERE BACK. HE JABBED OUT HURRIEDLY WITH THE PADDLE. HE SAW THE CORD LOOSEN AROUND HIS WIFE'S WAIST. SAW HER BRAIN SLIPPING DOWNWARD INTO THE WATER. HE ADVANCED... GRABBED FOR HER...



HE HELD HER CLOSE AS THE GULLS SETTLED OVER THEM AND THE DARK SHAPES JERKED CONVULSIVELY AT THEM IN THE TURBULENT, SPRAYING-UPON SEA. HE CLOSED HIS EYES AND POGGY RAH HER FINGERS THROUGH HIS HAIR AND CROONED "MOM, I LOVE YOU" TO HIM AND HE THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT HE WANTED FOR DINNER...?



TWELVE HOURS LATER HE WAS CLINGING ONLY TO THE LIFE RING WHEN THE SILVER SHARK APPEARED ON THE HORIZON, SLOWING TOWARD HIM.



EPILOGUE



END

PROLOGUE

HARVEY BAGGINS WAS A PEACEFUL, SIMPLE PEASANT MAN. FOR MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS HE HAD DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO THE PLEASURES, THE HAPPINESS OF OTHERS.

HARVEY ALLOWED HIMSELF BUT TWO INFLUENCES; HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER JOJO AND THE AMUSEMENT PARK LAUGH PALACE. HE LOVED BOTH WITH A DEEP, SELFLESS PASSION.



WEINER TANNENBAUM, UNLIKE HARVEY BAGGINS, WAS NEITHER PEACEFUL, SIMPLE NOR PEASANT. HE TOO, HAD DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO THE PURSUIT OF QUICK, DASH MONEY.



LIFE HARVEY, WEINER ALLOWED HIMSELF BUT TWO INFLUENCES, HIS DAUGHTER, JOJO AND VIOLENCE.



WEINER DEALT IN PROFESSIONAL VIOLENCE. HE SOLD HIS SERVICES TO THOSE WHO COULD MEET AFFORD HIM: THE CORRUPT, THE VILE, THE DESPILED OF THE MEER.



"Harvey Was a Sharp Cookie"

HARVEY KNEW THIS AWFUL THING HAD BEEN DONE TO HIS BEAUTIFUL JOBY.

IT WAS A DREADFUL, VICIOUS CYNIC'S WAY OF FORCING HARVEY TO ABANDON THE FUN PALACE.

A MAN... THE SAME MAN WHO HAD ATTACKED JOBY, HAD COME TO SEE HARVEY EXACTLY TEN DAYS BEFORE JOBY'S "ACCIDENT." HE HAD PAPERS FOR HARVEY...

...PAPERS THAT TURNED THE PALACE OVER TO A CONFIRMATION WHICH WOULD TEAR IT DOWN, REPLACE IT WITH NEW, HIGH-RIDGE OCEAN FRONT CONDOMINIUMS.



UNLIKE PLAYLAND'S OTHER EXHIBITORS, HARVEY WAS NOT FRIGHTENED BY THE MAN'S MEATHAWL INTIMIDATIONS. HE REFUSED TO COMPROMISE HIS LIFE'S WORK AWAY.

AND THE MAN... THAT HORRIBLE, CRUEL MAN WITH THE CRUEL, EVIL EYES, SAID HE WOULD RETURN. HARVEY REMEMBERED HIS LOW, DARKLY AUDIBLE THREAT VIVELY: "FOR EACH DAY YOU HOLD OUT, OLD MAN, THERE WILL BE A HORRIBLE, UNFORGETTABLE PUNALTY!"

TEN DAYS LATER, TEN PAPERBACKS LASHED. THE MERCANTILE, MERCILESS BASTARD HAD DESTROYED JOBY'S BEAUTIFUL, INNOCENT FACE AND SOOT WITH A FULL, PAIN-BREAKING RAZOR BLADE.



AND TODAY... THE ELEVENTH DAY, HARVEY KNEW HE WOULD RETURN.

BUT THIS TIME, PEACEFUL, SIMPLE, FEARS HARVEY WOULD GREET HIM MOST ENTHUSIASTICALLY.



THE FUR PALACE HAD BUT ONE ENTRANCE... ONE EXIT BEHESPS THE BRAZED ELEVATOR TO HARVEY'S CONTROL BOOTH.

FROM ATOP THE CONTROL OVERLOOKING AND CONTROLLING EACH OF THE PALACE'S AMUSEMENTS, THE OLD MAN FELT LIKE AN OMNIPOTENT, OMINOUS PRETTY... WATCHING EVERY MOVEMENT OF EVERY PATRON.



TRYING SO LOOK MENACING AS THE PALACE'S BIG JETS DASHED OFF HIS CLOTHING... OR THE HUNDRED FOOT SLIDE LUMPED HIS GOLD HEART INTO HIS CRUEL THROAT.



WHEN HARVEY FINALLY SAW THE HATEFUL, DISGUSTING FACE AT THE TICKET BOOTH, IT WAS NOT ALONE.

HARVEY KNEW HIS DAUGHTER'S ASSASSIN WOULD WANT TO SEE HIM AGAIN... TO ISSUE MORE THREATS... TO TRY TO COAX THE OLD MAN INTO RUSHING AWAY THE NOW ELDERSUNPOWERED PASSION IN HIS LIFE.

AND SINCE THE ANTICIPATED AMUSEMENTSEEKER WAS RUMMAGING THE CONTROL TOWER, HARVEY KNEW, TOO, ANYONE WHO WISHED TO APPROACH HIM SHOULD HAVE TO NAVIGATE THE PALACE'S OBSTACLES COURSE.



AND WHEN ORWHADE, HARVEY'S THEMET GIRL OF THIRTY YEARS, RUSHED THE OLD MAN ON THE PALACE INTERIOR, HARVEY UNCHAINED, AND KNEW HIS DAUGHTER'S ASSASSIN HAD IN AN INCONSEQUENTIAL WAY, THREATENED HIM AGAIN.



HAD HE NOT BEEN SO CONSUMED BY UNABATED ANGER, HARVEY MIGHT HAVE CHUCKLED AT THE THOUGHT OF A HIBERNATING CHUMMAN HELPLESSLY LOST WITHIN THE FAMED AMERICAN MAZE...



THE BEAST WOULD NOT EVEN ALLOW HARVEY THE PLEASURE OF SEEING HIM AT THE INHOSPITALITY OF THE PALACE'S AMUSEMENTS.



HARVEY WASN'T REALLY SURPRISED TO SEE THE MONSTER WHO HAD MUTILATED HIS JOY WITH A POLICE REPORT.



HARVEY, WHO HAD OWNED THE ROLLER COASTER ACROSSING THE FUN PALACE FOR MOST OF THE AMUSEMENT PARK'S FIFTY YEARS, HAD INFORMED HARVEY THAT PEOPLE WHO WERE PUSHING THE PARK OUT OF BUSINESS WERE PREDICATIVE...INFLUENTIAL IN CIVIL AFFAIRS.

IT WAS AN IRRESCUTABLE FACT THAT THEY HAD THE POLICE IN THEIR PROVOCABULARY WELL-LINED, POCKET.



HEREHE WAS ONLY ONE OF THE MANY DISPENSER'S SEMIOTIC WHO GUARDED HIS INTEREST IN THE PARK AWAY AFTER PERHAPS THE HIRING OF HUMAN THREATENER HIS GRAN CHILDREN.



ONE LONG ENTHUSIASTIC MONSTER MADE A KILLING QUICKEST TOWN, EVERYONE AGREED IT WOULD BE ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HARVEY, TOO, WAS FORCED TO ABANDON THE FUN HOUSE.



EVENTUALLY, THE CONFEDERATE'S TEMPORALITY PUSHED EVERYONE OUT, HARVEY WHO HAD RUN THE FERRIS WHEEL FOR A QUARTER OF A CENTURY...WILLY, THE OLD MAN WHO OWNED THE SWING BELL...EVAN BIG CHAVIS, THE EX-CIRCUS STRONGMAN WHO BARELY MADE OUT A LIVING EXHIBITING HIS FEATS OF STRENGTH

AND IN A WAY, THEY WERE ABSURD. THE KILLER KNEW THE OLD MAN WOULD NOT BE INTIMIDATED...



IN THE END, THE GUNMAN REGREDED TO THE ONLY WEAPON POTENT ENOUGH TO MOVE HARVEY OUT OF HIS BELOVED PALACE: A LEGAL NOTICE OF BULGING COMPENSATION.



FOR FIFTY YEARS HARVEY HAD RUN THE FUN PALACE DILIGENTLY, HONESTLY. EACH NIGHT HE PERSONALLY SERVICES THE ATTRACTIONS... KEEPING THEM SAFE AND CLEAN.



THE OLD MAN KNEW THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD DO TO "REPAIR" THE FUN PALACE OVERNIGHT. THERE WAS SIMPLY NOTHING TO REPAIR.



AND DESPITE THAT, HARVEY REALIZED, ON THE MORROW, ZOBY'S ASSAULT WOULD RETURN, AND FIND SOME REASON TO CLOSE THE DOORS OF THE FUN PALACE FOREVER.



THE OLD MAN SLURRED IN DESPAIR. HE WATCHED THOUSANDS... HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS, COME... TO ENJOY THEMSELVES... TO LAUGH... TO PLAY... TO FORGET FOR A WHILE THE PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD.



AND BECAUSE OF HARVEY'S DILIGENT, LOVING CARE THE FUN PALACE HAS REMAINED AS NEW, AS FRESH TODAY AS IT HAD BEEN IN 1924 WHEN IT FIRST OPENED.



THIRTY-FOUR YEARS THAT WAS LONG ENOUGH. ALL THE TIME REMAINING FOR THE FUN PALACE IT MADE HARVEY WANT TO CRY. HOW COULD HE FIGHT THE LAW HE WONDERED? IT SURELY WAS NOT RIGHT TO DEFY THE AMERICAN SYSTEM!



HARVEY WATCHED JODY'S TEARS... TEARS FOR A FEWEE OLD FOOL AND HIS BELOVED HOUSE OF AMUSEMENT. JODY... HER SUFFERING... HER STRENGTH SEEMED TO SPILL INTO THE OLD ENTERTAINER.



HIS BACK STIFFENED, HIS CHIN JUTTED FORTH WITH UNUSUAL YOUTHFUL DEFENSE.

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS SEEMED SO SHORT A TIME... AND YET HARVEY VOWED HE WOULD NOT GIVE UP FIFTY YEARS OF DEDICATION... OF HAPPINESS... WITHOUT A FIGHT.

THE CRAFTY AMUSEMENT MAN KNEW EXACTLY THE TYPE OF MODIFICATION NEEDED FOR THE "INSPECTOR" WHO WOULD RETURN ON THE MORROW.



WHEN IT WAS TIME TO CLOSE THE PALACE... WHEN THE LAST SWINGING PATRON VANISHED INTO THE NIGHT, DESTRAPE STAYED WITH JOEY WHILE OLD HARVEY RACED TO PURCHASE SEVERAL OF THE LARGEST CASES HE COULD FIND OF THE ONE ITEM NEEDED TO SAVE HIS BELOVED FUNHOUSE.



THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT REMARKABLE SOUNDS EMANATED FROM THE DARKLY LIGHTED, LOVINGLY MAINTAINED AMUSEMENT CENTER.



THAT MORNING WAS THE FIRST IN FIFTY YEARS THAT THE FUN PALACE REMAINED CLOSED.

IT HURT HARVEY DEEPLY TO SEE DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE EYES OF THOSE WHO HAD COME TO ENJOY THE PALACE'S AMUSEMENTS... TO GO. THEY BELIEVE FOR THEMSELVES, BUT, THE OLD ENTERTAINER KNEW HE MUST WAIT FOR THE ONE MAN WHO WOULD INEVITABLY COME.



AT THE PALACE'S MASTER CONTROL BOOTH, HARVEY WAS SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE WAS READY.

WHEN HE SAW THE "INSPECTOR" AT THE AUTOMATIC ENTRANCE, HARVEY PUSHED THE PROPER BUTTON TO ADMIT HIM... STRAIGHT INTO THE FAMOUS MAZE OF MIRRORS.



THE OLD MAN KNEW THE KILLED MERCENARY WOULD FIRE. NOTHING AMIDES IN THE TWISTING, REFLECTIVE BEAST. HE KNEW ALSO THAT THE ASSASSIN MIGHT FIND EVERYTHING TOO PERFECT... TOO SPOTLESS AND SAFE.



...AND CREATE IMPERFECTIONS OF HIS OWN THAT COULD LEAD TO THE PALACE'S CONDEMNATION.

HE DID...



...AND INSTANTLY SLICED HIS ELBOW ON A WALL OF MIRRORS EDGED BY SHARP BLADES PROTRUDING FROM BEHIND THE SHATTERED MIRROR PANES.



AGAIN THE KILLER LASHED OUT IN ANGER.

AND AGAIN, RAZOR-SHARP BLADES DUG INTO GENTLY KNEED MUSCLE. HE WOULD HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL.

THIS OLD MAN HAD CRAFTILY ANTICIPATED HIS BREAKING BARRIERS. YET, WEINER WAS SURE THE AUTO AMUSEMENT CHAMBER COULD NOT FORSEE HIS NEXT COURSE OF ACTION.



HARVEY SMILED AS HE SAW JOEY'S
MAGISTERIAL ASSAULT STEP
FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAZE WITH
**A CUT ARM, A BLEEDING
LEG.**



AND THEN, THE HYPO GUNMAN
SAW SOMETHING PASS ONE OF
THE RESULTS OF HARVEY'S VIGILANT
ALL-NIGHT RENOVATION. THE ONE
HUNDRED FOOT WOODEN CHUTE
WAS SHOVED WITH CUTTING
SHARP-SHOOT RAZOR BLADES.



THE CAUTIOUS KILLER RECEDED
BACKWARDS, RETREATING
FROM THE DEADLY CHUTE BEFORE
HIM. QUICKLY, THOROUGHLY, HIS
EYES SEARCHED FOR AN
ALTERNATE PASSAGEWAY,
BYPASSING THE RAZOR-
SHODDED SLIDE.



A SEEING, HATING EAGLE
FLAMED ABOUT HIS LIPS AS HE
SPED A HARMON MAINTEN-
ANCE PATH TO ONE SIDE
OF THE DEADLY SLOPE.



HE SLOWLY STEPPED TOWARD THE PASSAGE...
JUST AS HARVEY PUSHED A BUTTON IN THE CON-
TROL TOWER... SEPARATING A BLAST OF WARM
AIR INTO WEINER'S FACE...



...AIR CONTAINING MILLIONS OF TINY SMASHED
RAZOR BLADE PARTICLES! THE GUNMAN
HOWLED AS BLOOD DRIFTED FREELY FROM
HIS AGONIZED EYES!



AND THEN... IN A MOMENT OF SUSPENDED
BALANCE, WEINER FELL, STUMBLING,
SCREAMING... ONTO THE SLIDING
DEATH TRAP!



ONE HUNDRED FEET OF HORROR
LATER, THE STAGGERING
TANKERMAN LOOKED MORE LIKE
A MOTTLED BALL OF BLOODY
HUMANITY THAN A HUMAN
BEING.



HARVEY ONLY SHOOK HIS HEAD
SADLY IN THE CONTROL TOWER
OF THE FUN PALACE. HE HAD
WORKED ALL NIGHT, EXPECTING
THE KILLER TO BE A MUCH
TOLERANT, MORE
ENDURING MAN.



AND HE HADN'T EVEN DOTTEN TO USE
THE **SABRE**... THE **BRIDGE** OR THE
MACHETE... EACH EMPLOYED
WITH THOUSANDS OF SINGLE-SIDED
RAZOR SLAPSES.



THE OLD MAN SIGHED SOFTLY,
AND LOVINGLY PUT HIS ARM
AROUND HIS DAUGHTER.



HARVEY, INSTEAD, AND JOSEY
REALIZED THAT ONLY A BATTLE
HAD BEEN WON; THE WAR
WAS YET TO BE WAGED.



INVERMONT, FULDOST WITH CONCERN AND
RESPECT FOR HIS AGGRESSORS, HARVEY
SHERIFF HOPEFUL THAT THE NEW MAN
THEY SENT WOULD OFFER ALMOST
MORE OF A CHALLENGE!



END

NOW YOU SEE IT...

DIE! DEVIL BEAST OF
BOKHAR! SHAMP TOAD
OF THE NETHER REGIONS!
SLIME SNAKE OF THE
BLACK PIT!

[YAWN]
HARRY?
IS THAT
YOU?

MEET YOUR END,
SCUM-LEECH
OF THE ABYSES!
TAKE THAT!
AND THAT!

HARRY, WHAT
THE HELL ARE
YOU DOING?

NOT BAD,
EN? I FINISHED
HIM OFF IN
THREE STROKES!
HE NEVER HAD A
CHANCE — NOT
AGAINST HARRY
BLACK AND HIS
LIGHTNING BLADE!

WHAT'S
THIS? OH,
TERRIFIC!

IS THIS
SUPPOSED
TO BE
SEXY?

PROBLEMS
JONES'S
MAGAZINE



COME FAIR ONE... I HAVE
RIGHTFULLY WON YOUR
FAVOR IN TRIAL BY
COMBAT! SURRENDER
TO ME YOUR
VIRTUE.

HEY
VIRTUE'S
ABOUT AS
SURRENDERED
AS IT'S EVER
GONNA GET!

YOU SPURN
MY ADVANCES,
FAIR PRINCESS
OF LOHAUSH?

"FAIR
PRINCESS!"
MY KESTER!
I'M YOUR WIFE,
YOU BLISTERING
SPACE-JOCKEY!

WHERE
THE HELL DID
YOU PUT THE
SELECTOR?

AN,
HERE
IT IS?

AN
C'MON,
DELLA!
LEAVE
IT BE!

THAT'S
MORE
LIKE
IT!

DARN IT, I CAN NEVER
GET ENOUGH BLUE IN
THE OCEAN! HARRY,
YOU TUNE IT IN...!

CRIMINEY! THE OCEAN!
ALWAYS THE BLOODY
OCEAN! WHY NOT A
TROPICAL JUNGLE
ONCE IN A WHILE?

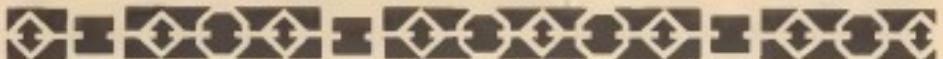
I HAPPEN
TO LIKE THE
OCEAN. IT'S
RESTFUL...
AND PLEASE
STOP PUTTING
WEIRD CLOTHES
ON ME WHILE
I'M ASLEEP...
IT'S CREEPY.

CANT YOU GET
SOME GULLS IN?
YOU KNOW HOW
I LIKE GULLS...

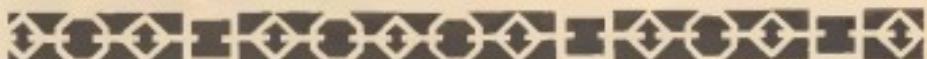
GULLS! OCEAN! CRIPES!
I NEVER HAVE ANY FUN!













END

THEY'RE HERE... ALL ARMED
AND YOU GET SO YOU CAN
SENSE THOSE THINGS.
ALL HEROES USED TO
HAVE IT!

THE KNACK, I MEAN... OF
KNOWING WHEN BRAINS
WAS BREATHING DOWN YOUR
NECK, LIKE RECENT PROOF,
BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER...

...THEY HAD ALLOWED ME ENOUGH
TIME TO PUT ON MY GLOVES!
AND THAT WAS THEIR MISTAKE...



...THEM LAST!

THEY DIDN'T KNOW
THEY WERE STALK-
ING FAR MORE
THAN A MAN

I AM LEGEND
FOR I AM...

THE Last SuPer HeRo



I HADN'T PUT ON THE GLOVES IN YEARS... NO REASON TO NOT IN A WORLD WHERE ALL MILITARY UNITS HAD LONG SINCE DISBANDED...



...WHERE THE LAST FULL-TIME POLICE FORCE WAS RETIRED WELL OVER A DECADE AGO...



...ALL BECAUSE MENTALOGIC TREATMENTS MADE THE CRIMINAL MIND EXTINCT! THE WHOLE INSTITUTION OF CRIME BECAME A SUBJECT FOR NOSTALGIA ADDICTS!



SO I HAD PUT THE GLOVES AWAY YEARS BEFORE. IN A PERFECT WORLD THERE WAS NO NEED FOR A HERO.

NO INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS TO REIFY, NO DANGEROUS ADVERSARIES TO CHALLENGE...

NOT MUCH OF ANYTHING REQUIRING THE SERVICES OF ONE SUCH AS MYSELF!



BUT THAT WAS BEFORE...
BEFORE THE INVASION
STARTED. I CAN REMEMBER
THE DAY I FIRST BECAME
AWARE OF THEIR MENACING
PRESENCE...



I SAW ONE OF
THEM... ARMED
AND STANDING
IN PUBLIC IN
DECORATED PLAZA...
DRESSED AS A
NATIONAL
GUARDSMAN.
BUT BEHIND
HIS VISION...



SOON THEY BEGAN TO SHOW UP
EVERWHERE... INFESTING THE
CITY LIKE A PLAGUE, AND PEOPLE
WENT ABOUT WITH FEAR AND UN-
DERSCOPE OF THE DANGER...



AND THEN IT DAWNED ON ME...
THE ONLY EXPLANATION
POSSIBLE...



WHY I SEEMED AWAKENED TO
THEIR CONTROL, I NEVER KNEW,
PERHAPS THE CONSTANT AMON-
TAIN STRESS OF MY SUSPIC-
ION. TWO YEARS HAD FORCED
MY WILL POWER AGAINST
SUCH OUTSIDE FORCES...

BUT WHAT
WERE THE
REASONS,
EVENTUALLY
THAT
SEEMED TO
SHAKE ME
OUT....

WHY AM I
LOOK
JUST LIKE
EVERYBODY
ELSE...



SOMEHOW THE INVADERS
HAD SUBJECTED THE GENERAL
PUBLIC TO THEIR HYPNOTIC
CONTROL, IN ORDER TO
KEEP THEM DOCTILE!

SOMEHOW THEY KNEW... THEY
KNEW WHO I ONCE WAS... AND
THEY WERE STARTIN' TO CLOSE
IN ON ME...

THEY WON'T MAKE
A SCENE IN PUBLIC...
THEY'LL FOLLOW ME
HOME AND MAKE
THEIR MOVE THERE.





AND THEN I HAPPENED TO CATCH MY REFLECTION ACROSS THE NORTH FACE OF A MASSIVE SKY-TOWER... ONLY TO SEE I WAS NO LONGER ALONE!

TWO OF THEM... CLOSING IN FROM THE REAR...

MY PLAN WAS TO ZIP AROUND THE PERIMETER OF THE SKY-TOWER AND SURPRISE MY TWO PURSUITERS FROM THE REAR!

DAMN! DAMN! IT'S NO GO!

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN TWO DOZEN OF THEM ALL TOLD... CHARGING DIRECTLY AT ME AND SPREADING FACELESS BLACK VENOM... I COULD SOMEHOW SENSE TWO DOZEN SNIPER ENEMIES!

PURSUE AND INTERCEPT! I WANT HIM ALIVE!

IN MOMENTS OF EXTREME CRISIS, SUPER HEROES ARE CLASSICALLY KNOWN FOR PROFESSIONAL QUICK-THINKING! THIS WAS JUST SUCH A MOMENT AS I LOOKED TO THE HEAVENS... AND FOUND SALVATION!



IT WAS A ROBOT-PUNCHED CARGO JETTER PASSING OVERHEAD! I KNEW MY ONE CHANCE TO STAYE OFF THAT ARMY WAS TO BLOW IT DOWN!



... AND THE QUASIRATIONAL FLAG FLEW AT HALF-MAST TODAY AS THE ASTRONAUTS MOURNED THE LOSS OF THEIR ENTIRE ALPHA SQUADRON...

TWENTY-FIVE BRAVE YOUNG MEN WHO DIED THEIR LIVES WHILE THEY WERE DESTROYING THIS PUBLIC MENACE... ONE DREKK NORTH...



MONSTER SHIRTS! NOW YOU CAN "WEAR" A WARREN COVER!

TOP QUALITY: THOSE WORDS OFFERED
BY THESE FINE SHIRTS. THE FULL COLOR
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5/1/21, sun 18 hours total sleep 15.10
5/2/21, sun 18 hours total sleep 15.10
5/3/21, sun 18 hours total sleep 15.10
5/4/21, sun 18 hours total sleep 15.10



0777950-0001 10 hours straight, average distance 86.50
0777950-0002 10 hours straight, average distance 116.00
0777950-0003 10 hours straight, average distance 130.00
0777950-0004 10 hours straight, average distance 130.00
0777950-0005 10 hours straight, average distance 130.00
0777950-0006 10 hours straight, average distance 130.00
0777950-0007 10 hours straight, average distance 130.00
0777950-0008 10 hours straight, average distance 130.00
0777950-0009 10 hours straight, average distance 130.00
0777950-0010 10 hours straight, average distance 130.00



47729-5 low 20-hrs 1.000 short straw 16.40
47729-6 1000 24 hrs medium straw 17.50
47729-8 1000 20 hrs long straw 18.00
47729-9 1000 20 hrs long straw 18.00
47730-1 1000 20 hrs long straw 17.00
47730-2 1000 24 hrs medium straw 17.00
47730-3 1000 24 hrs medium straw 17.00
47730-4 1000 24 hrs medium straw 17.00
47730-5 1000 24 hrs medium straw 17.00
47730-6 1000 24 hrs medium straw 17.00
47730-7 1000 24 hrs medium straw 17.00
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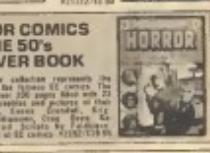


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